

- Install new utility systems throughout the grounds with capacity for growth and easy maintenance access.
- Create a lively visitor education center that expands the existing rather static White House Visitor Center exhibits into the exciting learning experience visitors say they want when they come to the White House.
- Give future first families who live in the formal White House an indoor, informal recreation space in a nearby below ground location.
- Create a site character around the White House that represents the highest quality landscape and urban park land.

The project moves now from planning to implementation—from vision to reality—from “we wish” to “we must.” Serving the presidency and the people at the same time is a privilege not often offered. It is important to both that actions now follow the path set forth.

As Eleanor Roosevelt noted, “[History] clearly shows that we arrive at catastrophe by failing to meet situations—by failing to act where

we should act . . . . [The] opportunity passes and the next situation always is more difficult than the last one.”

*James I. McDaniel has served as Director of White House Liaison for the National Park Service since 1984, providing visitor services, resource management, maintenance, planning, design, and construction for the White House and surrounding President's Park.*

*Ann Bowman Smith is the Assistant Director for Project Development, White House Liaison. She has served as project coordinator for the Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House since its inception. She joined the National Park Service in 1967.*

For more information, a summary of the *Comprehensive Design Plan* for the White House and President's Park is available from: Office of White House Liaison, National Park Service, 1100 Ohio Drive, S.W., Washington, DC 20242; Phone: 202-619-6344 and 800-292-0832; email: <White\_House\_Liaison@nps.gov>

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Lisa Kolakowsky Smith

## National Historic Landmark Stewards Association

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Until recently, no group existed to promote the needs of National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), our nation's most highly recognized treasures. Organizations exist to preserve Civil War Battlefields, barns, the choreography of dance and the history of film, but none to preserve NHLs. In November 2000, a group of owners and managers of National Historic Landmarks met in Philadelphia for the first official board meeting of the National Historic Landmark Stewards Association (NHLSA.) The mission of the NHLSA is to preserve, promote, and protect NHLs throughout our nation.

Of course, this national organization did not begin on that November day in Philadelphia. To tell the whole story, we must go back three years, to the National Historic Landmark

Stewards Congress in West Point, New York. It was in November 1997 that NHL Stewards (owners and managers of these irreplaceable sites) joined together for the first time on a regional basis to discuss their needs and possible solutions to their common problems. Over 100 stewards attended, representing NHLs in four distinct if often overlapping categories: private homes, institutional sites, interpreted historic sites and historic districts. Organized by the NHL staff of the National Park Service Philadelphia Support Office, the conference hoped to bring the stewards together to encourage collaboration of these significant sites.

The outcome was astounding. Though separated into four distinct discussion groups, stewards came to realize that while they had certain needs specific to their property types, they had

NHL stewards at the top of the PSFS building in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. NPS photo.



far more things in common. Chief among these were the need for increased financial and technical assistance and the need to educate the American public on the significance of NHLs. The congress culminated with the decision to form a national organization to represent NHLs.

In September 1998, representatives of the West Point Congress and other interested NHL stewards came together in Philadelphia to discuss the creation of such an organization. Paralleling the First Continental Congress, the group met in historic Carpenters' Hall, itself a Landmark, and unanimously agreed to pursue the formation of a national organization "to preserve, promote, protect and pay for" NHLs. Naming themselves the National Historic Landmark Stewards Association, this ad hoc group set out to develop an organization made up of the people responsible for the care of NHLs throughout the country. They spent the next two years meeting on a bi-monthly basis, writing the by-laws of the organization, including terms for membership, goals and organizational structure. The organization has been incorporated as a 501(c)3 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, continuing the historic parallel to our founding fathers. In a similar spirit, they agreed the group would be representational, with participants from all over the nation, working for the common good of NHLs.

The Stewards Association found an ally in our neighbors to the north. A group of Canadian citizens had begun forming a group of owners and managers of Canada's most significant places, its national historic sites, also in November 1997. This mirror organization, the National Historic Sites Alliance of Ontario, helped to reinforce the validity and necessity of the efforts of the group in the United States to preserve, promote, and protect a nation's most significant historic places. The two groups began collaborating by attending

each other's conferences, and hope to expand their collaboration in the future.

November 1999 brought another milestone for the group and the NPS' NHL program. A second congress was held in Cape May, New Jersey, this time organized with the assistance of NPS staff from all regions. Attendees included NHL stewards from 25 different states. During this congress, the stewards discussed the development of the NHLSA and joined in a ceremonial charter signing, signifying their support for the incorporation of the organization.

In June 2000, Articles of Incorporation were filed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on behalf of the NHLSA. The first official board meeting was held in Philadelphia in November, with representation from NHLs in most of the NPS' seven regions. During the three-day meeting, the board mapped out a strategy to further the mission of the NHLSA, beginning with opening lines of communications with all 2,300 NHLs in the nation and with the public at large. The group is working to develop a strategic plan that will promote their primary goals to educate the public and especially America's youth on the existence and importance of NHLs and to encourage participation of as many NHL stewards as possible.

*Lisa Kolakowsky Smith is an architectural historian, National Historic Landmarks program, National Park Service, Philadelphia Support Office.*

For further information on the NHLSA, contact Michael Ripton, President, <Mripton@phmc.state.pa.us> or 493 Woodcrest Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050-6854, or David Hollenberg, Associate Regional Director, National Park Service, Northeast Region <David\_Hollenberg@nps.gov>, who has been designated as the NPS liaison to the NHLSA.